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ABSTRACT

In an increasingly interdependent and culturally diverse world, the need for true integration of people and cultures demands that schools develop well-conceived multicultural approaches to education. Society provides multicultural education through a curriculum consisting of the socializing forces, including family, peers, neighborhoods, organizations, and the mass media. Unlike the societal curriculum, schools can plan how they will participate in the multicultural educational process. An effective multicultural education program must be integrated throughout the school curriculum, and ethnic studies and bilingual education must not be considered substitutes. Multicultural approaches and other educational/curricular reforms should be made mutually supportive. Inservice training programs should be available to increase multicultural awareness and improve the effectiveness of teachers and administrators. Finally, educators must solicit the involvement of parents, the community, and business in multiculturalizing the whole societal curriculum. (Author/MJL)

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MULTICULTURAL EDUCATION: PREPARING YOUNG PEOPLE FOR LIFE IN AN INTEGRATED NATION AND AN INTEGRATED WORLD

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(Revised synthesis of speech delivered at From Desegregated Schools to Integrated Education Conference, co-sponsored by the CEMREL Urban Education Program and the Milwaukee Public Schools in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, on July 11, 1979)

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What is multicultural education? It is the process of preparing young people to live constructively and sensitively in a multicultural nation and on an increasingly interdependent, constantly shrinking spaceship earth.

What does this have to do with desegregation? Quite simply, if we are to move beyond the superficial mixing of people and cultures into an era of true integration, with interpersonal, intergroup, intercultural, and international understanding, schools will need to develop a well conceived, well coordinated, fully integrated multicultural approach to education.

There exists a critical future imperative for effective multicultural education. While for the most part we cannot predict the future with precision, there is one thing about which we can be certain. The world of the future, like the world of the present, will be one of human and group similarities and differences, of persons of varying racial heritages, of countless cultures and ethnic identities, and of many nations. Moreover, the demands of our nation and our world will increasingly require citizens with the multicultural skills, knowledge,

and attitudes to build intercultural bridges of understanding and cooperation. Educators with a true concern for such a future of human understanding need to make sure that a multicultural approach becomes an integral part of our entire school process.

But is multicultural education <u>really</u> necessary? Wouldn't schools be better off if they just ignored culture, race, and ethnicity so that kids would not notice differences? Impossible! All people are aware of differences, as well as similarities. The reason? Because all human beings receive a multicultural education, whether or not they are aware of it. Because no person can go through life without receiving some kind of multicultural education, for better or for worse. Because everyone receives a multicultural education through the societal curriculum.

What is the societal curriculum? It is that massive, ongoing, informal curriculum of family, peer groups, neighborhoods, churches, organizations, occupations, mass media, and other socializing forces that "educate" all of us throughout our lives. Much of this informal education concerns ethnicity, culture, race, and foreign nations.[1]

Take just one component of the societal curriculum--the media.[2] Television, for example, has been receiving increasing scholarly attention. One study reported that young people between the ages of 3 and 16 spend one-sixth of their waking hours with the television set.[3] By the time of graduation, the average high school senior will have spent 12,000 hours in the classroom and 15,000 hours in front of the television set, according to another estimate.

Let us take a few examples of the multicultural educational impact of the so-called entertainment media. In a pioneering study,

Ruth C. Peterson and L. L. Thurstone discovered that viewing the classic silent film, Birth of a Nation, increased student prejudice toward black Americans.[4] Irwin C. Rosen found that the film, Gentleman's Agreement, improved student attitudes toward Jews, even though most of the tested students stated that the film had not changed their attitudes.[5] A more recent study reported that white children felt that TV comedies like The Jeffersons and Sanford and Son accurately portrayed black family life, although these same children admitted that such shows contrasted with personal experiences with their own black friends...whom they labeled as exceptions.[6] A teacher in one of my multicultural education inservice courses discovered that her elementary school students had deeply-rooted preconceptions about gypsies. In discussing where they had "learned" so much, students responded with answers ranging from "my folks" to "Wolfman" movies! These examples provide evidence of both the actual and potential multicultural educational impact of the media.

Clearly, schools cannot control whether or not students will receive a multicultural education. All we can decide is how schools participate in the process of multicultural education. If schools do nothing, they are implicitly saying that whatever kind of multicultural education is received through the societal curriculum is good enough for them. Well, it isn't good enough for me. The future of our multicultural nation and world is too important to be left to the chance of the societal curriculum, however positive some aspects of that curriculum might be.

Multicultural education is not enrichment. It is not an elective. It is not an extra. Multicultural education is basic, because learning to relate as human beings, learning to understand human and group

similarities and differences, learning to address intercultural issues, and learning to cooperate across cultural, ethnic, racial, and national lines are basic to our future.

Moreover, multicultural education is not simply for ethnic students or for desegregated schools. Whether a school district or school is segregated, desegregated, or desegregating, its students will ultimately enter a multicultural world. Schools need to help prepare students, all students, for life in that world.

Two points of clarification. What is the relationship of multicultural education to ethnic studies and to bilingual education? First ethnic studies, that dynamic, constructive educational thrust which began in the 1960s in response to the just, valid, and overdue demands of ethnic groups for the more thorough and accurate inclusion of their histories, cultures, and problems in the school curriculum. Ethnic studies courses and units were, and still are, valuable additions to the curriculum. They serve as launching pads for more comprehensive integrated curricular reform and provide opportunities for students wishing more intensive study of specific ethnic groups. Ethnic studies should be maintained and strengthened, but schools must not view it as a substitute for continuous, integrated multicultural education for all students.

Next bilingual education. It, too, serves an important educational function. It both addresses the realities of a society composed of persons with different language backgrounds and helps meet the multiple language needs of our nation as we face an increasingly globally interdependent future.[7] In particular, bilingual education has the

potential for developing the native multiple language resources of our society, thereby contributing to individual opportunity through strengthening bilingual skills and to national strength. But, like ethnic studies, bilingual education is not in itself necessarily multicultural. For the most part bilingual education is, at best, only bicultural--emphasizing mainstream U.S. culture and the other heritage culture of most of the students being taught. Like schools in general, bilingual education needs to become truly multicultural.

Given the inevitability of a multicultural future, the omnipresent pervasiveness of the multicultural societal curriculum, and the imperative for school multicultural education, what can we do? Let me briefly outline a four-pronged program for developing more effective multicultural education.

First, we must see to it that multicultural education is integrated throughout the school curriculum. Ethnic studies courses are fine. Isolated units on specific ethnic groups and foreign nations are fine. Ethnic assemblies, ethnic food days, ethnic festivals, and ethnic guest speakers are fine. But they do not serve as substitutes for a multicultural approach which is continuously integrated into the social studies, the language arts, mathematics, art, music, science, home economics, physical education, and all other traditional components of the school curriculum.[8]

Second, we need to integrate a multicultural thrust into the other educational reform movements. While we in multicultural education proclaim the importance of our type of education, other reformers are

calling for other types of curricular revision. Global education, nonsexist education, career education, citizenship education, media education, law-related education, environmental education, health education, energy education. And the beat goes on. Reformers in each of these areas are as sincere as multicultural educators in believing that their concerns should be included in the school curriculum. Yet the hours in a school day, the length of the school year, and the time of the already overloaded teacher remain fixed.

How can we deal with this dilemma? The answer, from a multicultural perspective, is two-fold. On the one hand, we should see that multicultural education addresses multiculturally the basic issues of these other reform movements--the relationship of ethnicity and culture to the experiences and concerns of women, to global forces and interdependency, to career opportunities and obstacles, to the obligations and challenges of citizenship, to the function and impact of media, to law-related institutions, values, and practices, to the environment, to personal and societal health beliefs and conditions, to the use and conservation of energy, and to the concerns of the myriad other educational reform movements of today and tomorrow.

Conversely, we must make intensive efforts to see that a multicultural approach and multicultural concerns are integrated into these other educational reform movements. Global education is incomplete if it fails to deal with the mutual implications of global forces, nations, and ethnicity, including the transnational linkages between ethnic groups and their foreign root cultures.[9] The study of women and men is incomplete if it fails to address the interface between gender and

ethnicity in terms of variations in experience, identity, problems, opportunities, and cultural norms. Law-related education is incomplete if it fails to address the differential impact of law and law-related institutions on persons of different ethnic backgrounds, the operation of rules, norms, and informal law-related systems within ethnic groups, and alternative ethnic and cultural perceptions of law-related institutions.[10] Media education is incomplete if it does not address the media treatment of different ethnic groups and foreign nations.[11] In short, ethnicity, race, and culture should be important and integral themes in any educational reform or school subject, not simply themes to be dealt with in ethnic studies or during multicultural time in the classroom. For that reason, much of my work in recent years has been in the area of "multiculturalizing" other educational reform movements. As concerned educators, all of us should strive to make sure that multiculturalism is an explicit and continuous aspect of any curricular reform adopted in our schools or districts.

A third component of my program for developing more effective multicultural education concerns teacher and administrator awareness. All school districts should have an ongoing inservice program of improving educator understanding of the multicultural implications of everything they do, increasing their skills in teaching multiculturally, and strengthening their ability to teach more effectively in culturally diverse classrooms. Such inservice training could address various topics --multicultural approaches in the classroom, multicultural nonsexist evaluation of classroom materials and the societal curriculum, multicultural curriculum, the history, culture, and problems of various

ethnic groups, and the relationship of culture and learning. For teachers and administrators in a multicultural society, such ongoing training is essential.

Fourth, school educators need to become more thoroughly involved in multiculturalizing the societal curriculum. Societal institutions can be outstanding allies in the crusade for multicultural and global understanding. In the past few years, an increasing amount of my time has been devoted to working with the multicultural societal curriculum.

For example, we need to communicate more effectively with parents as to how they can participate more constructively in the multicultural educational process. Some of my most exciting educational experiences have come from parent workshops concerning what they can do to help increase their children's multicultural understanding. Educators need to encourage governmental agencies to expand multicultural awareness training for their employees so that services can be provided more equitably for persons of all ethnic and cultural backgrounds. Many other societal institutions have great positive potential as multicultural educators. For instance, at the present time I am working with one religious denomination in developing a multicultural approach to church school education using the theme, the Bible as a multicultural document. Educators should work with media, both locally and nationally, to see that they provide fair, accurate, and balanced treatment of the different ethnic groups in our society.

Educators also should become more involved in helping private businesses to multiculturalize their employee development programs. Currently I am presenting a series of workshops on Mexican Americans for

executives and supervisors of Southern California companies. Why? Because of growing private industry awareness that traditional "culture-blind" managerial training is merely "blind"--it does not necessarily prepare, and in some cases may actually disprepare, people to relate effectively and sensitively to a multicultural workforce and public.

The imperative for multicultural education is urgent. The agenda is both challenging and exciting. Multiculturalizing of the basic school curriculum. Multiculturalizing of other educational reform movements. Ongoing multicultural inservice for teachers and administrators. Increased educator involvement in helping to make the societal curriculum a multicultural ally rather than an antagonist. There is much that we can do. Our future and the future of those who come after us is too important for us to neglect our multicultural obligations.

FOOTNOTES

[1]For example, see: Randall M. Miller (ed.), The Kaleidoscopic Lens: Ethnic Images in American Film (Englewood, N.J.: Jerome S. Ozer, 1980); Cherry A. McGee Banks, "A Content Analysis of the Treatment of Black Americans on Television," Social Education, XLI, 4 (April, 1977), pp. 336-339, 344; and Bradley S. Greenberg and Pilar Baptista-Fernández, "Hispanic-Americans: The New Minority on Television," Project Castle Report No. 12 (East Lansing: Department of Communication, Michigan State University, 1979).

[2]The Payne Fund Studies, published by Macmillan Company from 1933 through 1935, constitute one of the most extensive assessments of the impact of films on attitudes and behavior. In 1975, social psychologist George Comstock identified 2,300 research papers on television and human behavior. G. A. Comstock and M. L. Fisher, Television and Human Behavior: A Guide to the Pertinent Scientific Literature (Santa Monica, Calif.: The Rand Corporation, 1975).

[3]Wilbur Schramm, Jack Lyle, and Edwin B. Parker, Television in the Lives of Our Children (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1961), p. 30.

[4]Ruth C. Peterson and L. L. Thurstone, Motion Pictures and the Social Attitudes of Children (New York: Macmillan, 1933), pp. 35-38.

[5]Irwin C. Rosen, "The Effect of the Motion Picture 'Gentleman's Agreement' on Attitudes toward Jews," The Journal of Psychology, XXVI (1948), pp. 525-536.

[6]Bradley S. Greenberg, "Children's Reactions to TV Blacks," Journalism Quarterly, XLIX (Spring, 1972), pp. 5-14.

[7]For a cogent statement of the critical need to develop the United States' multiple language resources, see the November, 1979, report of the President's Commission on Foreign Languages and International Studies.

[8]For a discussion of concepts and strategies for integrating multicultural education into the school curriculum, see: James A. Banks, Teaching Strategies for Ethnic Studies (2d ed.; Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1979); James A. Banks, Carlos E. Cortés, Geneva Gay, Ricardo L. García, and Anna S. Ochoa, Curriculum Guidelines for Multiethnic Education (Arlington, Virginia: National Council for the Social Studies, 1976); and Carlos E. Cortés, Fay Metcalf, and Sharryl Hawke, Understanding You and Them. Tips for Teaching about Ethnicity (Boulder, Colo.: ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies/Social Science Education and Social Science Education Consortium, 1976).

[9]Carlos E. Cortés, "Global Perspectives and Multicultural Education," Global Perspectives. Education for a World in Change (February, 1980), pp. 3-6.

[10]Carlos E. Cortés, "Multicultural Law-Related Education in the Humanities: Preparing Young People for a Future of Constructive Pluralism," in Lynda Carl Falkenstein and Charlotte C. Anderson (eds.), Law and the Humanities in the Elementary School (Chicago: American Bar Association Special Committee on Youth Education in Citizenship, forthcoming).

[11]Carlos E. Cortés, "The Role of Media in Multicultural Education," Viewpoints in Teaching and Learning, LVI, 1 (Winter, 1980), pp. 38-49.